

OFF TASK FORCE – NORTH CENTRAL REGION REPORT

ADAMS, CHELAN, DOUGLAS, GRANT, AND OKANOGAN COUNTIES

GMA STATUS:

Note: Not all counties are required to plan under the Growth Management Act (GMA). When the GMA was passed, the law used a population and population growth trigger to require certain counties to plan. Other counties could “opt-in” to GMA planning by majority vote of the county commissioners. All counties in Washington (whether or not they are planning under GMA) must adopt critical area ordinances (CAOs) and all counties must designate agricultural, mineral, and forest lands of long term commercial significance. Counties planning under the GMA are considered “fully planning” because they are implementing all elements of the act. Counties planning only their CAOs and resource lands are considered to be “partially planning”.

All counties must review and, if necessary, update their CAOs, resource land designations, comprehensive plan, and development regulations. Since all counties have completed their initial planning, they are now in the process of updating these documents. The statute identifies a schedule by which various counties must update, but due to controversy surrounding the costs associated with these updates, the legislature amended the statute and allowed jurisdictions to extend the timeline for updates.

Adams County: Update not complete, eligible for 3 year extension. In September of 2008 Adams County adopted Ordinance 0-02-08 repealing Chapter 18.06 "Critical Areas and Natural Resource Lands" and adopting a new chapter 18.06 "Critical Areas and Natural Resource Lands".

Chelan County: Update completed in 2006. The county is proposing to create a review committee that will look at all applications for agriculture tourism and work with the applicants and neighbors to mitigate any potential conflicts before a permit is issued. Also of interest to agriculture is the recent application of a Planned Unit Development application in March of 2008. The proposed project (Tuscan Village) consists of a mixed-use development that includes approximately 3 acres of commercial, 544 residential units, trails, amenities, and approximately 97 acres of commercial agricultural operations on approximately 300 acres to create a village conceptual development.

The Tuscan Village is envisioned as a rural residential community and world class spa resort with an Italian Tuscany theme expressed through its architecture and environmental design. Tuscan Village would be situated on 273 acres of land on the south shore of Lake Chelan. 90 acres would remain in vineyards. In addition to providing an amenity for property owners, the vineyards would support the growing market for “ag-tourism.”

Douglas County: Update not complete, eligible for 3 year extension. The Douglas County Board of Commissioners and the Douglas County Planning Commission agreed that an objective, independent analysis should be undertaken of the codes that have been adopted that allow certain development

activities within designated agriculture resource areas. This study was determined necessary before the county could consider adoption of a resolution defining compliance with the Growth Management Act, which has required a general review and update of the county's comprehensive plan. Documents are available from the Chelan County website.

Grant County: Update completed in 2006. In September of 2008, the Board of County Commissioner held a public hearing in accordance with Chapter 25.12 of the Grant County Unified Development Code to consider proposed amendments to the Grant County Comprehensive Plan. Proposed amendments considered for adoption include several site-specific land use designation changes. Examples include six property owners looking to downzone from Ag to Rural Resource lands one acre and two acre minimums. The Commissioners approved all the downzone requests.

Grant County is in the process of a significant overhaul of their Development Codes, and one of the things they hope to establish is some framework for a TDR program, that way some of the agricultural lands that exist can still provide a 'value' to the owner that might be higher than agricultural land values, and the county can still preserve their agricultural lands. County staff noted that these programs can be complicated and very costly to implement.

Okanogan County: In the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan.

LAND TRUSTS IN THE REGION:

Adams County: Inland Northwest Land Trust works with willing private landowners to protect the region's natural lands, waters, and working farms and forests for the benefit of wildlife, their community, and future generations. To be efficient and effective in the larger inland area, they focus their efforts on the "Wild Lifelines", places that nourish wildlife and preserve clean air, clean water, and scenic beauty of the region.

Chelan and Douglas County: Working in both Chelan and Douglas counties is the Chelan Douglas Land Trust. Their mission is to conserve land, water, and a way of life through voluntary land agreements, education, partnerships, stewardship, and well planned growth. One of their focus areas is on Working Landscapes described as productive, profitable and sustainable farms and forests.

Okanogan County: The Methow Conservancy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to inspiring people to care for the land of the Methow Valley. Their conservation tools include conservation easements which have protected 5,646 acres and 18.3 miles of critical riparian shoreline habitat along the Methow River and its tributaries. Their easements help families keep their farms and ranches and protect the open space and scenic views that regularly draw tens of thousands of visitors to the Valley. They also host a monthly natural history lecture series and provide field trip opportunities to raise awareness about conservation issues.

The Okanogan Valley Land Council (OVLC) protects the Okanogan's open spaces and working lands. They accept and manage conservation easements received from private land owners; engage the public in land conservation issues, projects, and education; and help owners preserve family lands for future generations. OVLC is the primary land trust in the Eastern Okanogan and Western Ferry counties for protecting farms and ranches and preserving open spaces and wildlife habitat.

Approved for Current Use Assessment

		True and Fair		Current Use		
County	Acres		Value \$		Value \$	Difference \$
Adams	1,075,760	\$	537,228,300	\$	233,070,500	\$ 304,157,800
Chelan	33,116	\$	71,456,417	\$	18,009,358	\$ 53,447,059
Douglas	894,198	\$	399,295,100	\$	149,992,680	\$ 249,302,420
Grant	1,038,035	\$	1,001,787,953	\$	445,603,393	\$ 556,184,560
Okanogan	559,162	\$	637,369,500	\$	55,017,765	\$ 582,351,735

CONSERVATION FUTURES PROGRAMS:

The conservation futures tax is a local option property tax assessed at the county level, at a maximum rate of 6.25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Revenue from the tax may be used to purchase or acquire development rights for open space, agricultural, and timber lands.

No counties in the North Central region have futures programs.

RIGHT-TO-FARM

North Central Region Right to Farm			
County	RTF "Yes"	RTF "No"	County Code/Chapter
Adams	Yes		Chapter 5.24
Chelan	Yes		Chapter 5.36
Douglas	Yes		Chapter 5.08
Grant	Yes		Chapter 23.04.080
Okanogan	Yes		Chapter 5.28